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## Impact on Communications Network

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*Bordeaux Mt., St. John*



*The above photo was taken on St. Thomas*

Hurricanes Irma and Maria both hit the United States Virgin Islands in September as rare Category 5 storms, and the impact can still be felt today, as the territory pushes toward recovery. The impact on the territory's communications infrastructure was severe. The 200+ mile per hour wind gusts ripped through the steel towers knocking out cellular voice, data, and landline services. Cellular towers on all three islands experienced catastrophic damages some of which are depicted.

The Bureau is working to restore services and also building a resilient infrastructure for the future. Challenges with power distribution and terrain/geography are making this a formidable but manageable task.

This experience reinforces my personal support of the FirstNet program and its utility. We have managed to communicate by implementing new technologies including a Microsoft experimental Television White Space internet solution and timely work-arounds by an outstanding BIT staff. The people remain resilient as we look forward to technologies that will keep us connected even in the worst of times.

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## Next Steps – Network Build-out

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The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) rings-in 2018 in deployment mode after years of consulting, planning, and designing the network. The Virgin Islands along with 50 states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico has opted-in to the FirstNet/AT&T Network. FirstNet pledges to deliver a network which provides public safety with enhanced coverage for voice and data communications, especially in rural areas; capacity to stream video and utilize other innovative broadband technologies; and specialized features and applications that are developed to meet the mission needs of each field.

The Virgin Islands is committed to working with FirstNet and AT&T through implementation of the network and development of Public Safety applications.

*With all 50 states, two U.S territories, and Washington, DC, opting-in, FirstNet will move full speed ahead to deploy the network nationwide*





## Meet the SPOC



Angelo "Tony" Riddick brings to this position thirty (30) plus years of military leadership including 16 years of Information Systems, Operations and Cybersecurity experience. Director Riddick is committed to fulfilling the mission of FirstNet in the Virgin Islands.

## Hurricanes Irma & Maria



*FEMA Recovery Update as of 12/21/2017*

## Virgin Island's Opt-In to FirstNet



On Jul. 28, the U.S. Virgin Islands became the first U.S. territory to opt-in to the FirstNet network. The United States Virgin Islands participated in FirstNet consultation and outreach activities throughout the planning of the network. Gov. Kenneth Mapp expressed his support in a [press release](#) stating, "I have determined that it is in the best interest of the United States Virgin Islands and the Country to participate in the FirstNet

deployment of the National Public Safety Broadband.

This decision means subscribers (emergency responders) in the territory will have priority access to AT&T network services which is expected to advance and adapt with new technology through the next 25 years.

As we recover from the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria, our first responders remains top priority as they respond to rapidly-changing and life-threatening situations.



*Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the territory's communication infrastructure.*

*Photo: St. Georges hill, St. Croix*

## About FirstNet

FirstNet's mission is to develop, build, and operate the country's first Nationwide public safety broadband network dedicated to first responders. This broadband network will fulfill a fundamental need of the public safety community as well as the last remaining recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. FirstNet will bring 21st century tools to millions of organizations and individuals that respond to emergencies at the local, state, tribal and federal levels. Learn more at [www.firstnet.gov](http://www.firstnet.gov) and <http://firstnet.vi.gov>